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SHELTER FOR AFRICA'S HOMELESS POPULATION

- Preparations towards the International Year of Shelter for the homeless (IYSH)

SUMMARY

A sizeable proportion af Africa's population live under indigent (Shelter) conditions that could best be termed homeless. This phenomenon pertains to both urban and rural sectors of the region. For the rural areas, man-made and natural disaster have been the major causes of homelessness. With prolonged drought, desertification has taken root particularly in the Sahel, rendering several rural people homeless. Another source of natural disaster which has been a major cause of of homelessness in both rural and urban localities is cyclonic storms. These have caused devastating effects on several landed property and left many people homeless. A third cause of homelessness which could be associated with both urban and rural areas in Africa is man-made disaster, particularly political and racist aggression with the attendant refugees. Several refugees are homeless in the African region.

However, the urban areas have their characteristic homeless population living mainly in squatter and slum areas of urban Africa. In cities where the problem assumes gross dimensions, street living, sleeping in street drains, discarded boxes, wrecked ships, ect. are not uncommon. The homeless problem of urban Africa is a direct result of the process of urbanization and natural population growth. The suprising factor is that despite the glaring indigent living conditions, the plight of the homeless has not attracted enough attention of most governments.

Experience gained since 1976, however indicates that with renewed political commitment, international co-operation and assitance, the homeless could be housed effectively. It is suggested that much of the efforts to provide shelter for the homeless should be centred on the following areas:

- training (the homeless people) to produce local building materials and to perform simple building operations,
- technical assistance - in form of artisans and building foremen, to organized groups of homeless people,
- demonstration projects in the production and use of local building materials to provide shelter and low-cost sanitation systems,
- financial assistance to procure limited but essential tools, equipments and materials,
- organization (particularly of the homeless into manageable target groups)
- co-ordination with universities, research institutions and international organizations and popularization to maintain a continuity of the shelter programme,
- peri-urban land-use planning to facilitate both the acquisition of building plots and provision of essential services in the future.

It is finally suggested that each government should establish a department under the ministry responsible for housing to co-ordinate all the activities connected with the IYSH programme.

The paper is divided into seven parts. Part one defines the subject of homelessness and identifies its major causes in the African region. Part two provides a more detailed examination of the dimensions of the homeless problem as it relates to shelter requirements, land, infrastructure/services and public assistance. In part three, possible solutions to the homeless problem are discussed taking close account of experiences gained in the field of human settlements since 1976 as well as the major roles to be played by individual governments. Part four discusses the contribution from the homeless population while in part five a stage approach to implementation is outlined. Parts six and seven concentrate on the contributions of ECA, conclusions and general recommendations respectively.

INTRODUCTION

1. On 29 September 1980, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka made the following statement to the 35th Session of the UN General Assembly: "In the rush for development, urbanization has run out of control, sprawling ugly slums and ghettos, depopulating rural areas, and over crowding cornubations. Urban poverty, congestion and squatter are problems common to many of our developing countries". The Prime Minister then proposed the declaration of a special International Year to be dedicated to the problems of the millions of peoples who were homeless or who lived in shanties and substandard houses - the poorest of the poor throughout the world.

2. In support of the call made by the Prime Minister, the General Assembly took resolution 35/76 of 5 December 1980 in which it expressed its view that an international year devoted to the problems of the homeless peoples in urban and rural areas of the developing countries could be an appropriate occasion to focus the attention of the international community on those problems. As a follow-up, the General Assembly adopted resolution 36/71 in December 1981 and decided, in principle, that 1987 should be designated as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH). Consequently, the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements - UNCHS (Habitat) submitted a report (HS/C/5/5) on the subject to the Commission on Human Settlements at its fifth session. The end result of all the above (as well as other subsequent activities) is the resolution 37/221 adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh Session on the IYSH.

3. Among others, resolution 37/221 designates the UNCHS (Habitat) as the secretariat for the IYSH and as the lead agency for co-ordinating the relevant programmes and activities of other organizations and agencies concerned. The resolution also invites other bodies of the United Nations system to collaborate and make special efforts through existing and new programmes during the period 1983/1987 to help achieve the objectives and goals of the year.

4. It is true that street living and living in non-dwellings is becoming a common feature of urban and rural life in Africa also. Although these homeless people live in rather appalling conditions, their plight has failed to attract enough attention from governments as well as international organizations. The call from the Prime Minister and the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly could not therefore come at a more opportune time. However, as a typical housing issue, the problem of the homeless varies from one region to another thus necessitating differences in approach. This paper therefore, briefly examines the homeless problem of the African region and suggests some approaches to finding solutions.

1. AFRICA'S HOMELESS POPULATION

Who is Homeless

5. In everyday language, homelessness refers to living in a non-dwelling at best, or at worst, living without a dwelling. The latter refers to street living, while examples of the former include living in street drains, unserviceable vehicles, wrecked ships, packing cases left at dumping sites, etc.

6. In a broader sense, non-dwellings include buildings graded to be structurally unsafe, or those which, due to other factors (such as proximity to high tension power lines, leaking atomic reactor plants etc.), have been graded environmentally hazardous for human habitation.

7. The important factor about all the above is lack of security and inadequate protection against the extremes of weather. As a basic necessity of life, a home is supposed to be a safe abode with specific functions to fulfil among which protection against climatic variations, man-made environmental hazards, security of property and life, as well as privacy for economic and social functions feature most. Whenever a building does not effectively meet the above functions, it could conveniently be graded a non-dwelling thus rendering the resident a homeless person.

8. For the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH) however, homelessness is more complex, and the exact implication of the term as well as the purpose of the particular programme could best be deducted from the speech of the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka when he said: "In the rush for development, urbanization has run out of control, sprawling ugly slums and ghettos, depopulating rural areas and over crowding cornubations... The replacement of shanties with decent housing is not a peripheral part of development. It is the very core".

9. It is thus clear from the above that when the Prime Minister proposed the declaration of the IYSH, he had in mind both peoples who are homeless, as well as those who live in shanties or substandard houses.

10. For purposes of clarification therefore, it would be helpful to categorize the homeless population into two main classes according to the main features of their dwellings.

Table I: Broad Categorization of Homeless Population (according to main features of dwellings)

Category	Type of Dwelling	Main features of Dwelling
1a	non-dwelling	Streets living or living on verandas of commercial buildings, etc. - primary requirement is shelter.
1b	non-dwelling	Street drains, packing cases, wrecked ships, unserviceable vehicles - primary requirement is shelter.
2a	non-dwelling	Structurally and/or environmentally hazardous buildings - primary requirements are basic improvement and/or replacement.
2b	non-dwelling	Buildings which are structurally unsound and without basic services - primary requirements are basic improvements and provision of service facilities and infrastructure.

Characteristics

11. Any reference to homelessness implies the poorest section of the population characterized by lack of tangible possession, inadequate security, unemployment (or under paid), lack of skills, and whose immediate objective is to obtain just the basic necessities of life - i.e. including shelter. However, providing shelter for the homeless, requires as a first step, understanding the causes of homelessness. In the African region, two factors (among others) could be delineated, namely, migration/urban growth, and disaster i.e. man-made or natural.

12. The push and pull factors of immigration as well as urban population growth in the African context cannot be discussed in this paper, however, their undesirable effects on housing cannot be underestimated. In short, the highly centralized civil service structure, the concentration of service facilities and industries in a few primate cities on the one hand, and the apparent neglect of the rural sectors on the other, have contributed to define the direction of migratory movements.

13. The majority of African governments have not been able to provide adequately for the migrant in terms of employment, housing and other amenities. Some of such people, particularly the late migrants become temporarily homeless. With time, they turn to live in non-dwellings while searching for temporary manual jobs to make a living. At the last stage, they develop shanties out of any available materials usually at the urban periphery or even within the city boundaries on plots with doubtful ownership. These constitute the slums and squatter settlements of urban Africa which harbour the majority of the region's homeless people.

14. Homelessness in the context of rural settlements should be viewed from a different perspective. In these areas, the problem relates to living in dwellings that could be described as structurally unsafe. Usually built of local materials with varying structural quality, some rural houses have short life span. Quite apart, they lack periodic maintenance with the result that most of them develop structural failures, which render the occupant unsafe, and hence practically homeless.

15. A final cause of homelessness in the African region relates to disaster - natural and man-made. Certain parts of the African continent lie within seismic belts. Earth tremors, land slides and volcanoes which are associated with such disaster prone zones often render many people homeless. Other parts of the region particularly the south-eastern coastal strips are subject to devastating cyclonic storms. When these strike, the loss of landed property is enormous and several people are rendered homeless. A few examples are given below:

Table II: Damage to Landed Property by Cyclonic Storms

Date	Location	Causes of homelessness	No. of people affected
19/10/81	Bangui (C.A.R.)	Voilent Storms	700
20/1/82	Antananarivo (Madagascar)	heavy rains and floods	37,500
28/3/82	Yohamam & Antalaha (Madagascar)	Tropical Cyclones	117,000

Source: UNDRO News (Nov. 1981, January 1982 and March 1982).

16. Of late, desertification has become an equally important form of natural disaster which has rendered several rural settlements homeless. Prolonged droughts in the Sahel and regions boardering on the Kalahari have caused a rapid depletion of vegetative cover, resulting in the loss of agricultural produce and herd. Faced with hunger and starvation, the affected population has become normadic and homeless.

17. And yet another major cause of homelessness could be man-made. Fire could be disastrous; however, the housing problem of homeless refugees in the African region has become an issue of national and international concern. Faced by factors usually beyond their control - either through acts of aggression or internal political squabbles, Africa's refugees as by June 1982 numbered some 2.6 millions of which about 49% were concentrated in Somalia and Sudan alone. Certainly, the majority of these are homeless.

Size

18. Based upon the foregoing discussion, it becomes difficult to state explicitly, the total number of people who could be termed homeless in Africa. Although it is estimated that almost 59% of the urban population of Africa live in slums and squatter settlements, all buildings in the same sectors cannot be graded as non-dwelling. Case studies taken from Kumasi (Ghana), Lusaka (Zambia), Nairobi (Kenya) and Port Sudan (Sudan) indicate that on the average, some 72% of the dwellings surveyed were built of materials with 'very limited durability' 1/. It is estimated, for example that about 59% of the building material used in Deim Omna (Port Sudan) are scrap. It would appear however that mud bricks, adobe, mud and wattle constitute the main building materials in the majority of slums and squatter settlements in Africa. Most of these structures also have no foundations, thus limiting their durability.

19. One would conservatively conclude that the slum and squatter populations which live in structures built of bricks, adobe, timber, mud and wattle are not necessarily homeless although these buildings may have limited durability. On the contrary, that percentage of squatter and slum population which live in structures built of scrap and other mixed materials could be termed as living in non-dwellings and hence homeless. This proportion could be estimated at about 26% of the slum and squatter population for the whole region although there could be very wide variations between one settlement and another.

20. Upon the above assumptions, the homeless population of Africa's slums and squatter settlements could be estimated as follows:

Table III: Estimated Homeless Population in Urban Africa

Total Population of Africa	% Urban	% living in Squatter & Slum	% living in non-dwellings	Number homeless
436.6 m	28 (122 m)	59 (72 m)	26 (19 m)	(19 m)

21. It is similarly difficult to estimate what percentage of refugees would be termed truly homeless. The problem of providing adequate shelter for refugees depends upon the number involved at a given time and the ability of the host country to absorb the numbers in question. However, when large numbers are involved, as in the case of Somalia (700,000), Sudan (537,000), Zaire (325,000) and Burundi (214,000), a reasonable number are likely to remain homeless.

1/ Survey of Slums and Squatter Settlements, UNCHS (Habitat), 1982.

22. A similar note could be sounded about the region's population rendered homeless as a result of natural disaster. In instances related to storms, the calamities are localized. As a result, governments, aid agencies and charitable organizations have always cooperated to provide temporary shelter for the victims. Such assistance has however been lacking or else inadequate for victims of desertification.

23. It could be concluded from the above that the number of Africa's homeless population found in the slums and squatter settlements could be estimated to be about 19 million people. In addition, there are countless numbers rendered homeless as a result of natural or man-made disaster.

2. DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM

24. A mere definition or categorization of the homeless population is insufficient to paint a true picture of the indigent conditions under which they live. The homeless problem relates to shelter, land, services and infrastructure requirements.

Shelter requirements

25. A basic requirement of the homeless population is shelter. Estimated for the 19.5 million urban homeless people, not less than 3.25 million housing units would be required (i.e. assuming an occupancy rate of 3 persons to the room unit and two rooms to the house). The above figure should however be regarded as the accumulated shelter needs and excludes the requirements for persons affected by natural or man-made disaster.

26. With an alarming urban growth rate of 5% per annum, shelter needs for the urban poor will be more pressing than ever, noting the inflationary trend in the building sector of all countries compared with dwindling real incomes. Quite apart, there does not appear to be any early end to the refugee problem of Africa in as much as the whole region is concerned. Africa may be confronting recurrent shelter problems relating to the refugee population and people displaced by natural disaster into the distant future.

Land

27. In most African countries, the new migrant seeks refuge in the inner city slum being attracted by the probability of finding a casual job. In the event of failure, some resort to entering squatter zones while the majority turn homeless. The point of interest is that the potential sites of manual jobs are most attractive to the homeless. At the early stage job security is the primary preoccupation of the homeless person.

28. However, when a source of income is secured, the migrant next looks for a rental housing commensurate with his earnings; this usually turns out to be within the inner city slum or the outer squatter area. In Africa, such a migrant would share a room in a shanty with colleagues while earlier migrants with higher incomes

obtain property rights from traditional land lords to erect a new shanty. In Africa, such development cannot be termed illegal in as much as verbal consent is obtained from the land owner, and since the development takes place outside the city boundary and hence uncovered by building codes and regulations.

29. The main problem of land which affects Africa's homeless population therefore relates to the high prices requested by the traditional land lord. On the contrary, where State land is involved, slow and complex legal procedures have restricted access to land for the majority of the homeless population. The main effect of the above two inhibiting factors (namely high land prices and slow/complex legal procedures) is the high residential densities which characterize all squatter settlements in the region.

Infrastructure and services

30. The appaling living conditions of the homeless population in Africa are felt when mention is made of infrastructure and service facilities. The most common problems relate to inadequate and unsafe water supply, inadequate sewage and garbage disposal systems, lack of health and educational facilities, poor roads and transportation services. The conditions vary and depend upon the location of the homeless person, i.e. inner city slum or squatter. In all however, water and waste disposal pose the major problems in Africa.

31. In most slum and squatter settlements the provision of water has not been accompanied by an effective waste disposal system. The result is concentration of liquid and solid wastes in backyards, ditches and other drainage courses, inevitably leading to the spread of contagious diseases. However, the greatest service problem of the homeless population in Africa relates to hygienic disposal of human excreta. And this pertains to both urban and rural localities.

32. Pit and bucket latrines constitute the main means of human excreta disposal not to mention the fact that defecation at open spaces is still a common phenomenon in some squatter settlements and areas invaded by people displaced by man-made and/or natural disaster. In instances where bucket or pit latrines are provided as communal facilities, constant queues outside the blocks demonstrate their total inadequacy not to mention the lack of privacy.

33. The situation could be appallingly bad if a large number of homeless refugees for example, invade a locality. The resulting inconvenience, lack of privacy and health hazard to the homeless population could readily be imagined.

34. On the regional level, health services are inadequate. In Africa, health provisions for the homeless are worse even though as a result of living conditions, they are especially exposed to diseases of different origins, particularly those related to environmental conditions and personal hygiene. The World Health Organization plays a major role in meeting the health requirements of homeless refugees and people displaced by natural disaster in Africa. However, where the homeless population are clustered in slums and squatter settlements, they have to do with a very limited number of clinics. Long waits, delays, complicated forms, impersonal and insensitive treatment by nurses and other officials as well

as long travelling distances to the clinics are usual difficulties the homeless have to contain. As a result, most of the homeless people prefer to use traditional health care methods. Lack of adequate access roads to these locations constitute another major bottleneck. Most of the road links to outer squatter settlements lack routine maintenance and are without drainage gutters. As a result, the access ways are not motorable during the rainy season. Closely related to the problem of lack of access roads, the outer squatter settlements are often not covered by other municipal facilities such as bus services. The total effect is that most homeless people walk for long distances in order to perform their daily economic and social activities.

Public Assistance

35. However, a surprising aspect of the problems facing the homeless population in the African region is the apparent [illegible] of public attention and assistance. It is proof enough from the foregoing discussion that the enormous public investments made by African governments in the sectors of health, water, waste disposal, education and transportation are invariably not to the benefit of the homeless population.

36 In the place of public assistance, however, there are unsympathetic public legislations which aggravate the living conditions of the homeless. In events where city boundaries are extended to cover existing peri-urban squatter settlements it is not uncommon for public law enforcing agents to advocate for the demolition of some existing structures. It could thus be summed up that the major problems of the homeless population in Africa relate to lack of shelter, land, infrastructure, services and insensitive public attention and assistance.

3. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE HOMELESS PROBLEM

37. It could appear that the most effective approach to solving the homeless problem would be renewed political commitment by individual African Governments addressed in two main ways:

- drawing upon experiences gained since 1976 in human settlements development to strenghten on-going activities as well as to initiate new programmes at the national and local levels.
- Co-operation with UN Agencies, International Organizations, Universities and Research Institutions to apply relevant solutions to the problems through demonstration.

38. The objective of this chapter is not to reproduce what has been achieved since 1976, but only to recall that date as a time when a concerted international approach has been adopted towards human settlement problems as a unit. Experiences gained during the period could therefore be applied by African Governments to resolve their local problems.

39. In line with the earlier achievements, it could be stated that the IYSH cannot be a period for research and experimentation; it is a period for practical demonstration. The said experiences could be applied to the major problem areas as follows:

Land

40. A sample survey of slums and squatter settlements in the African region indicates that as a result of the nature of land ownership in Africa - which could take the form of stool lands, family property or individual ownership, land for housing could readily be obtained through verbal consent (or else the offer of drinks) to the family head or chief. No legal documents or procedures in the western context are involved. Such residential land use is therefore, legal and as a result, most squatters in Africa cannot be termed illegal occupants. Squatting in Africa should first be viewed from the point of high residential densities, lack of service facilities and basic infrastructure.

41. It would therefore appear that the traditional system of obtaining building plots outside city boundaries is so deeply rooted in the society that any attempts to impose legal processes in the western context would only lead to very complex and cumbursome procedures. On the contrary, the peri-urban zones are the most fertile locations for future squatter settlements. A preventive approach will be for the governments to institute a system of peri-urban residential land demarcation in consultation with traditional land owners. Such a system would sustain the easy traditional process of acquiring building plots as well as ensure that peri-urban residential land use would conform with minimum standard requirements for the provision of infrastructure and service facilities. This proposal indicates a compromise between, (a) the traditional practice of acquiring building plots, (b) urban residential land use practice, and (c) provisions for developing essential services such as water, drainage, access ways, power lines, etc. in the future.

42. Another approach to the land problem would be for governments to utilize legislative instruments - where they exist, to acquire undeveloped plots for housing the homeless. Such plots could be serviced and distributed to the homeless to develop their own shelter.

43. A final suggestion relates to land already settled by squatters. As stated earlier, such land occupations are legal in the African context. It is suggested that African governments should rectify such acquisitions to conform with any legal processes that might be required. The effect will be that the squatter cannot be ejected, instead he has the requisite title to the land already occupied and should only be encouraged to improve upon the shelter.

Building materials

44. The most promising effort on the part of the homeless to provide their own shelter is demonstrated in the constructive manner,in which they utilize all kinds of materials to erect a dwelling. Ordinarily, these materials spell the professed undesirability of the type of buildings found in squatter and slum

settlements. It is noted, for example, that in Deim Omna (Port Sudan), 59% of the buildings are constructed from scrap and a further 39% from mixed materials. However, the efforts of the homeless in the latter direction should be regarded as their adaptation to economic and social conditions.

45. Experience gained since 1976 indicates that building materials need not be taken to mean only cement and galvanized iron roofing sheets: there are close substitutes such as lime, burnt bricks, dimension stone, timber and the like which are locally available. With little technical assistance, these materials could be produced by the homeless to build standard housing. In the latter regard, the primary solution to the building materials problem of the homeless population should be viewed from the point of productive organization which could be achieved through training as discussed later.

Building codes and regulations

46. In most countries these codes and regulations favour the tastes of the medium and high income urban dwellers. Particularly in urban Africa, building codes and regulations tend to favour the use of imported building materials. Quite apart from the fact that the indiscriminate use of codes based upon English, French or Portuguese systems inhibit co-ordination between neighbouring African countries, most of these regulations tend to mitigate against the ready use of local building materials. It could be stated that before most of the codes and regulations were prepared, there had not been sufficient research results to prove the effectiveness and durability of some local building materials. Such results are available at present.

47. A renewed role of the government will therefore, be to recognize the effectiveness of traditional building practice and local building materials in solving the the problem of the homeless population. For most countries, this will entail the revision of the building codes and regulations. As a complement to the revision of existing building codes and regulations, there is an urgent need to train the homeless people to produce and utilize available local building materials. There are appropriate technologies for the production of building materials from clay, natural pozzolanas, stone, timber and some agricultural waste. These have not been extensively utilized because the homeless people may not have the production know-how. It is the responsibility of the government to organize and train the homeless people to produce some of these materials.

Technology

48. What has been most wanting in any attempt to house the homeless is technology It is worth noting that the majority of the homeless people of Africa are unskilled or at best simi-skilled people. Combined with their low incomes therefore, their major imput into house building would be labour. Dwellings contructed by the homeless population therefore, involve the simplest possible technology.

49. In Africa, however, the architect has an ingrained control of conventional building construction technology. Once the so called standard design is completed, both building materials as well as construction technology have been predetermined. Usually trained in the developed countries the specifications naturally follow those found in the industrial countries much to the neglect of the rural capacities of the homeless population.

50. However, building construction technology need not be complex. Experience gained since 1976 indicates that there are simple and appropriate construction technologies that could be suitable to the needs of the homeless people. These technologies which could vary from the production of clamp-fired brick through burning of lime in dugouts to the use of simple hand tools to erect a wall, would be enough to meet the needs of the homeless. Africa does not need to import technology to produce prefabricated concrete slabs to house the homeless population. The important requirement here is training.

Finance

51. Finance plays a major role in house building since it is the most convenient means of exchange. By their very appearance, dwellings of the homeless give an impression of indigence. Table IV explains the income levels of the inhabitants of some selected slums and squatter settlements.

52. With such low wages usually below the absolute poverty income level, the homeless cannot afford any financial inputs into developing a dwelling. And since they have no landed property, fixed assets, or regular employment, they cannot have access to any organized financial market for mortgage loans.

53. However, there are feasible financing mechanisms which could effectively minimize the financial bottlenecks encountered in housing. Among the lot, thrift and savings associations, ease systems as well as cooperative housing associations could be organized in such ways that part of building materials produced (utilizing mainly unskilled labour) could be sold to generate funds for other inputs needed for the association's houses. The solution again lies in effective organization.

54. In addition African Governments could realize appreciable financial savings and raise funds through the following ways:

- limiting public financial assistance to specific building cost items only;
- organizing fund raising programmes to meet the initial financial requirements of the IYSH;
- restructuring the housing finance mechanisms to be more effective in mobilizing funds from the general public for long term investment in the housing sector;
- instituting discriminatory interest rates on mortgage loans in favour of the homeless people.

Table VI: Medium household income levels in select slums and squatter settlements and estimated poverty levels in urban areas

City	Settlements	Medium household income in US$/month	Absolute poverty income level for city US$/month	Relative poverty income level for city US$/month
Kumasi	Ayigya village	72	-	143
Lusaka	George Town	65	175	-
Nairobi	Kawangware	74	122	144
Port Sudan	Deim Omna	23	-	155

Source: UNCHS (Habitat 1980) Case studies and Social Indicators Data Sheet (World Bank, 1979).

55. For the immediate implementation of the programme funds will be required to hire technical skills, purchase specific building materials and equipments and also to organize demonstration and training programmes. At the initial phase of the programme, it would be necessary for every government to prepare details of the tasks to be undertaken, how these would be implemented and the costs involved.

56. Funds for the above phase of the programme could be raised through organized raffles, lotteries, etc. in addition to a limited budgetary allocation. This is feasible since the specific tasks involved could be detailed out with the appropriate cost constraints. Such financing mechanisms may however, not be appropriate long term financial sources for the homeless people. The fact is that after demonstration and training, a long term building process should be maintained and this would require a long term financing mechanism. This could constitute a major bottleneck noting the fact that the homeless are the poorest of the poor. It is suggested that African governments should restructure their existing financing mechanisms to be suitable to the long term needs of the homeless.

Infrastructure and services

57. As indicated earlier, what the homeless people need most (apart from basic shelter) are infrastructure and services such as water, waste disposal facilities, public transport, etc. Experience gained since 1976 however indicates for example, that there are low-cost waste disposal systems that could effectively get rid of household refuse and human excreta at very minimal maintenance cost. There are also technologies for the provision of water systems, access ways and street drains at comparatively low costs. Much of the costs involved could also be reduced by organizing the homeless people to offer free labour under technical supervision.

Training

58. The foregoing discussion indicates that governments can achieve much through effective organization and training. It is possible that in any efforts to provide shelter for the homeless, African governments could make commendable progress through training. A few examples are stated below:

Table V: Examples of Possible Effects of Training on Public Programmes to provide Shelter for the Homeless

Area of Training	Type of Training	Expected Output	Effects on IYSH Programmes
A. Production of building materials	Hand moulding of clay brick	Sund-dried brick	Reduce costs of walling material
B. "	Clamp firing	Burnt brick	Reduce cost of walling material
C. "	Burning of lime in dug-outs	hydrated lime	Reduce cost of binding and plastering material
D. Low cost sanitation	As in A, B & C plus brick laying	building materials and craftsmanship	Hygenic waste disposal system

59. It is evident from the above that with dedicated political commitment in the area of training alone, the greater proportion of inputs into any simple dwelling could be provided by the homeless people themselves.

Technical assistance

60. Another area of public commitment in solving the shelter problems of the homeless population is in the field of technical assistance. This could be accomplished by assigning building foremen and skilled artisans to assist organized groups of homeless people to build their homes. Such forms of technical assistance could also serve the purpose of training the people on the job so that basic building skills are transmitted gradually. In the latter area of technical assistance, governments could co-ordinate with technical and vocational institutions (which specialize in building trade) to deploy their students for practical trianing.

Demonstration Projects

61. It would be noticed therefore, that even on the part of governments, the solution to the problem of homelessness hinges on demonstration projects. These should be in the areas of production and use of local building materials, construction of low-cost waste disposal systems, etc. A combination of demonstration, technical assistance and training in any specific area of human settlements would be useful in instituting a building process with the active participation of the homeless people themselves. In the area of demonstration, it would be useful if African governments could co-operate with universities and research institutions to enable the latter to implement some of their research results.

Organization

62. Next to renewed political commitment in all the aforementioned areas, effective organization will be required to provide shelter for the homeless. In particular the homeless people should be organized into squads, each with a specific task to perform. The problem is that with the large numbers of homeless people to be housed, the demonstrations, instructions/training, etc, would yield fruitful results only if a limited number of people are involved at a time. In addition, there is a need for a designated government department to be responsible for co-ordinating the various activities under the programme.

4. CONTRIBUTION FROM THE HOMELESS POPULATION

63. The extent and nature of contribution from the homeless people towards the provision of shelter would depend upon the nature and cause of homelessness. Where homelessness is a result of natural disaster - particularly storms and flooding, it is probable that some of the people affected could contribute in cash and kind. However, in all other instances, the homeless have nothing to contribute apart from unskilled or semi-skilled labour.

64. It would thus be noted from the above that where large numbers of homeless peoples are concerned, their effective organization could pose major management problems. This situation could become worse in squatter areas where the primary concern of the people is to secure jobs, or in the instance of those rendered homeless through desertification (and hence threatened by hunger and starvation) or even in the instance of homeless refugees whose primary obsession would be food and security. In all events, however, labour could be the maximum input that could be expected from the homeless.

65. It should thus be a major programme for the governments involved to organize the homeless into groups to undertake specific tasks. The performance of such tasks should be scheduled not to disrupt any economic activities in which the homeless might already be involved.

5. STAGE APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION

Compendium of technology options

66. The discussion so far identifies three facts: that a reasonable proportion of the African population live under homeless conditions; that the dimension of the homeless problem is so enormous that it is only through a renewed and determined political commitment that the situation could be bridged; that there exists useful experiences that could be used to provide effective solutions.

67. For the African region, the first problem is whether the said technology options are known to all member States. Ineffective information dissemination could constitute a major bottleneck to the transfer of appropriate technology. It thus becomes necessary to prepare a compendium of technology options (appropriate to African conditions) on the specified subject areas. This compendium could thus furnish African governments with information on technology options available to solve specific shelter problems. The range of materials to be furnished by the compendium would vary from building materials, tools and equipments, through training manuals to organization.

68. In order to make a breakthrough, it will be advisable for each State to select and concentrate implementation efforts on very few technology options as well as problem areas. This will be necessary if people are to acquire the requisite skills easily and to transmit them to others.

Identifying priority activities

69. It is also possible that the homeless problem could vary from one country to another; for example, while in one country the problem may be centred in squatter settlements thus requiring upgrading, the problem of another country may relate to stranded refugees or people displaced by natural disaster. The peculiar characteristics of the homeless problem of a particular country should enable policy makers to identify priority activities. Again this is very necessary in order that meagre public resources are not thinly spread over a wide area of activities thus achieving no impact.

Strengthening existing activities

70. A common defect with policy decisions in the African region is the constant change of priority areas from year to year without implementing a previous programme to a successful end. For one year the emphasis may be to develop local building materials, in the following year resources and emphasis are diverted to water supply; the latter would not necessarily take off before the policy identifies sewage development as most crucial settlement programme and allocates all resources to it. Usually, nothing is achieved and on the contrary, resources are wasted.

71. In this regard, the formulation of programmes to develop shelter for the homeless should not necessarily mean an end to other housing programmes. Policy makers should examine the possibility of integrating all related programmes so that one could strengthen the other.

Popularization and continuity

72. The total exercise of the IYSH would become meaningless if it should end with demonstration projects. The IYSH programme should be considered as both curative and preventive - curative in the sense of solving current homeless problems and preventive in the context of facilitating a housing process for future homeless people. It is therefore necessary for each government to maintain a department under the housing ministry which would popularize the activities and ensure their continuity.

6. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ECA

73. The ECA could contribute towards the successful implementation of the IYSH programme in four major areas:

- Preparation of a compendium of technological options for shelter development.
- Review of existing building codes and regulations on subregional levels.
- Demonstration projects particularly for the production of local building materials.
- Co-operation with the UNCHS in any other fields that might be deemed essential for the African region.

74. The ECA has already undertaken some valuable works in the fields mentioned above. What remains is to demonstrate the results at subregional and regional levels.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

75. It would appear that all over Africa governments have policies and schemes for low-income housing. These schemes invariably cover that sector of the population deemed to have limited rent capacities. However, the shelter problems of the poorest of the poor have escaped any determined public attention. With an economic down-turn in most African countries, increased unemployment and accelarated migration into the urban centres, the proportion of Africa's urban homeless population could multiply during the foreseeable future. In the Sahel and other regions bordering the arid zones desertification has turned thousands of Africans homeless. In addition, there is no predicting what damage storms could cause to landed property. Nor will it be possible to eliminate the problem of homeless refugees in the near future. It could be said that homelessness in Africa is here to stay for some time.

76. In conclusion, it could be stated that the time is overdue when homeless people should be given adequate attention for their housing needs. However, in preparing any programme of action for the homeless, both curative and preventive measures should be examined so that the solutions last. The following recommendations are therefore proposed.

African governments should renew their commitment to assist the homeless population to develop their own houses. In that regard, training and demonstration programmes should be given priority. The maximum efforts of the homeless people should be co-ordinated, and emphasis should be on the use of local resources. The ECA should assist African governments in their efforts to house the homeless population of the region. This could be achieved by popularizing technological options available for the human settlements sector, reviewing existing building codes and regulations, organizing demonstration projects for the production of building materials; and finally through co-operation with the UNCHS.